Rev. Charles Campbell, ME South

I'd like to go deeper with the Anti-Slavery Cause among Protestant churches during the 1840's and 50's. Indeed, the Slave question split many denominations, and what transpired in New York with Bible & Tract societies reached California. In 1850, our state looked very Cavalier, but within ten years became largely Republican. It's no surprise that the controversy harmed unity among our tightknit '46er pioneer families in Santa Clara but also those who arrived shortly thereafter.

One of the later emigres who followed William Campbell, was his dear brother, the Reverend Charles Campbell. As said earlier, the Campbells were a large Scot-Irish family primarily from the border state of Kentucky. Charles was already a licensed preacher at the Annual Conference there, and arrived in California 1849 before the rest of the family came in 1852. Always busy, Rev. Charles opened a commission store the same year at the nearby San Jose Pueblo with his brother, William, before selling his interest.

A short yet generous biography of the Reverend is given in Simmon's *History of Southern Methodism* (1886):

"Rev. Charles Campbell was a local preacher from the State of Kentucky. He came to California in 1849 with the first great rush to these golden shores. He entered heartily into this organization, an exerted all his influence for its promotion. He was a man of strong mind. His sermons were always original and logical. In an early day in Kentucky, he posted himself on the immersion controversy and was frequently called upon to defend Methodist views on that subject, in which he was ever successful. He lived for a time in San Francisco, where he identified himself with the Methodist Church, South, in that city. Subsequently he moved to Oakland, and was, I believe, elected its second mayor. In early life he had studied law, and resuming his study of that profession, he began its practice. From Oakland he removed to Stockton, where he was elected District Attorney of San Joaquin County. He afterward removed himself to Yolo County, where he ended his (professional) career in 1862. Wherever he lived he exerted a good religious influence, preaching wherever opportunity offered. " p. 35

Though the Methodists took advance ground against slavery in the 1780's, the bishops slowly moderated the position of the church, hoping to keep General Conference together. In 1844 slavery came to a head with the Northern and Southern MEC Conferences painfully splitting.

It wasn't until 1850, with the arrival Bishop William Taylor, & other formal ecclesiastical organization, that Southern families like the Campbells soon separated from abolitionists, such as the anti-slavery Anthonys & Hecoxs.

Yet, from this division, MEC South churches appeared in the Valley—e.g., St. Paul's in San Jose, Rucker's Chapel near present-day Campbell, and Mr. Bane's Church in Gilroy. Given the Campbells' overall convictions, Porterville also likely belonged to the South.

The division is illustrated in the South's Pacific Conference's earliest class meeting. Formed in 1851 by elder A. Wynn, the class separated from Rev. Anthony's 1847 San Jose society, securing the local legislature building. With sixteen members, not only was Rev. Charles and his family prominent but also Drs. Bascom and Powell. Similar divisions occurred on the board of Wesleyan College, located in Santa Clara, with the Rev. J.C. Simmons leaving. Incredibly, it appears men with fierce Temprance opinion would remit to the Southern Conference— even Isaac Owen, our first Presiding Elder.

After the MEC South's Annual Conference in 1853, preachers like Rev. Campbell and JC Simmons vanish from our Church record, so any biographical information discovered is a wonder. However, the Southern Conference ultimately reunified with the Northern one in 1939 and today is congenially UMC. – C Bartlett